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ABSTRACT

This study compared patterns in the requests of native Persian-speakers (n=50) and native speakers of American English (n=52) under the same social constraints. Students were undergraduate students in their native countries. Data were gathered by controlled elicitation (open questionnaire) and coded for degree of directness. Results show the Persian speakers were much more direct than American speakers when making requests, and that Persian speakers used considerably more alerters, supportive moves, and internal modifiers than American speakers. It is suggested that in some languages such as Persian, speakers may compensate for level of directness by such strategies. It is also noted that these differences in requestive speech acts may cause some cross-cultural communication problems. Implications for teaching awareness of directness conventions in second language teaching are discussed. Contains 24 references. (MSE)

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A Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Requestive Speech Act Realization Patterns in Persian and American English

Zohreh Eslamirasekh

This study examines the similarities and differences in the realization patterns of the speech act of requesting between Persian speaking students and American speakers of English, relative to the same social constraints (cross-cultural variation).

The subjects of this study were 52 native American English speaking undergraduate students at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and 50 native Persian speaking university undergraduate students studying at the University of Isfahan, Iran.

The data was collected by a controlled elicitation procedure called "open questionnaire." The data was then categorized based on the coding system developed by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). In order to analyze the directness level of requests a t-test was performed with mean level of directness as the dependent variable and nationality as a grouping variable. A chi-square analysis was performed where frequencies of different components of the requestive speech act (parts other than the head act) were compared between the two languages.

Our analysis revealed that Persian speakers are considerably more direct when making requests compared to American speakers. The result also showed that Persian speakers used considerably more alerters, supportive moves, and internal modifiers compared to American speakers. It is suggested that in some languages like Persian, speakers may compensate for the level of directness in their requestive speech acts by using more supportive moves, alerters, and internal modifiers.

These differences in requestive speech act realization patterns may cause some cross-cultural communication problems for speakers of these languages. In this sense the study has some pedagogical implications for teaching ESL/EFL. In particular there appears to be a need to assist

Persian speaking learners of English in developing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic awareness concerning the appropriate degrees of indirectness in American English.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most compelling notions in pragmatics is the notion of speech acts. Speech acts have been claimed by some (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975) to operate by universal pragmatic principles, and by others to vary in conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages (Green, 1975; Wierzbicka, 1985b). Their modes of performance carry heavy social implications (Ervin-Tripp, 1976) and seem to be ruled by universal principles of cooperation and politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1983). And yet cultures have been shown to vary drastically in their interactional styles, leading to different preferences for modes of speech act behavior. Culturally colored interactional styles create culturally determined expectations and interpretative strategies, and can lead to breakdowns in intercultural and interethnic communication (Gumperz, 1978). Each culture or subculture poses a different set of constraints; and, for a second language learner, the formidable task is that of learning the target language within this framework of constraints.

The cross-cultural comparison of speech acts has recently attracted considerable interest. Perhaps the fascination that the study of cross-cultural pragmatics holds for language teachers, researchers, and students of linguistics stems from the serious trouble to which pragmatic failure can lead.

One of the most recent efforts to collect and analyze cross-cultural speech act data is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) undertaken by an international group of researchers. CCSARP, initiated in 1982, represents the first attempt to analyze speech acts across a range of languages and cultures to investigate whether there are universal pragmatic principles in speech act realization, and what the characteristics of those universals might be. The authors of this study point out the need to move away from Anglo-cultural ethnocentricity in the study of speech acts by widening the scope of languages and cultures studied. The need to expand the scope of speech act studies to include non-Western languages has been expressed by several other researchers (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1985b; Cottrill, Forthcoming; Flowerdew, 1988, 1990 and Rose, 1992). This study is a response to such a need. The scope of cross-cultural speech act studies will be expanded to include a non-Western language through a contrastive study of requests in Persian and English.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The first group of subjects, Group A, consisted of 52 native American English speaking university students studying at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. This group consisted of 21 males and 31 females, ranging in age from 18 to 22. They were university students enrolled in different academic disciplines (other than Linguistics and ESL).

The second group, Group B, consisted of 50 native Persian-speaking university students studying different academic majors (except English and Linguistics) at the University of Isfahan in Iran. This group consisted of 26 male and 24 female students ranging in age from 18 to 35 years old. The decision to conduct this phase of our data-elicitation in Iran resulted from our concern that the use of subjects residing in U.S. would produce biased results because of the influence of the subjects' acculturation to the American culture on the realization patterns of performed directive acts. Consequently, subjects were chosen who have never been to the U.S. or to other English speaking countries, although they have studied English for about seven to eight years in a formal classroom setting in Iran.

The decision to choose only university students in both groups of subjects was intended to attain as strict a comparison as possible of the different strategies used by these subjects in performing directives.

Data Collection

One major concern of sociolinguistic research is the manner in which data are to be collected. Ideally, all data should come from "natural" conditions: "our goal is then to observe the way that people use language when they are not being observed"--the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972, p. 209). Unable to achieve this we might settle for "authentic" data, recorded by participant observers during natural interactions. However, in this study we are interested in getting a large sample of one specific speech act used in the same contexts. This would be virtually impossible under field conditions. These demands for comparability have ruled out the use of ethnographic methods, invaluable as they are in general for gaining insights into speech behavior.

Beyond the practical methodological advantages, elicited data have theoretical advantages as well. As pointed out by Hill et al. (1986, p. 353) "the virtue of authenticity in naturally occurring speech must be weighed against its reflection of speaker's sociolinguistic adaptations to very specific situations." Our use of written elicitation techniques enables us to obtain more stereotyped responses, i.e., "the prototype of the variants occurring in the individual's actual speech" (p. 353).

Because of the above mentioned reasons, we decided to obtain the data by the use of a controlled elicitation procedure. We designed an experiment in which a corpus of directives were collected from two different groups of subjects by an "open questionnaire form," which is a modified version of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) used in CCSARP. The questionnaire used in our study differs from the DCT used in the CCSARP in several aspects. First, hearer response was not included. All dialogues of the Discourse Completion Test developed by the CCSARP contain a hearer's response to the request, i.e., the missing turn to be filled in by the subject. The hearer's response included in each CCSARP dialogue is designed to signal the desired act by providing co-textural clues for the speech acts needed to complete the dialogues. For example, the following dialogue is said to occur after a meeting in which Tony and David have taken part.

> Tony and David live in the same neighborhood, but they only know each other by sight. One day, they both attend a meeting held on the other side of town. Tony does not have a car but he knows that David has come in his car.
> Tony:_____.
> David: I'm sorry but I'm not going home right away.

The hearer response, the line of dialogue given after the blank line, was eliminated because as Rintell and Mitchell (1989, p. 251) say, it might in some way influence the response of the subjects other than to clarify what is expected of them to provide. It is possible that having this response in the dialogue and granting or not granting the request will limit the range of responses as requests by our subjects. The inclusion of an uptake by the other "participant" in the dialogue may encourage subjects to choose a particular form corresponsive with that uptake instead of some other form that might be equally possible in the situation described. Another modification made in our questionnaire was that the gender of the speaker was not specified. In the DCT used in the CCSARP, situations were set up with the gender of the participants indicated. Males filling out the questionnaire, then, were asked to report what females would say and females filling out the questionnaire were asked to report what males would say. Given the troublesome nature of speakers' assumptions concerning their own language use, pointed out by Wolfson et al. (1989), it seemed best not to specify gender. Also, since in Iranian culture speakers from the opposite sex will not make requests from each other as freely as speakers of the opposite sex in American culture, the gender of the hearer was not specified except in one situation (speaker making a request from his/her brother). These considerations were also the reason for the third modification, in which subjects were asked only how they would respond, not how they thought someone else would respond in a situation. In the CCSARP, subjects were asked what they thought someone else

(e.g., a professor, a policeman) would say in a given situation. This was avoided in our questionnaire by designing only situations in which subjects were placed in different roles which a university student would normally encounter in everyday situations (not in imaginary roles like being a policeman).

Our instrument (DCT) consists of six socially differentiated situations. In each situation we specified the setting and the social distance between the participants and their status relative to each other. Subjects were asked to respond to each situation, on the assumption that in doing so, they would provide the speech act desired. (See Appendix A for the English version of the questionnaire.)

A Persian version of the questionnaire was constructed, consisting of basically the same situations and same variables as the English version, but with the cultural context surrounding the dialogues modified from an American one to one appropriate to an Iranian setting. Accuracy of the translation was determined by relying on the investigator's own judgment as a native Persian speaker as well as on the judgment of other Persian-English bilinguals with whom she consulted. The investigator translated the questionnaire and then gave it to two other Persian speakers who are fluent speakers of English and who also are graduate students in linguistics, to check the translation so as to ensure authenticity and accuracy.

Data Analysis

All of our data is analyzed within a shared analytical framework, using the coding system developed by CCSARP. The coding scheme is based on frames of primary features expected to be manifested in the realization of requests. The frame provides the meta-paradigm for the analysis of the data, allowing for both "zero" realizations for each feature, as well as subclassifications of listed features. The primary features for the coding of requests included a measure for directness level, alerters, perspective, supportive moves, and internal modifications.

The unit of analysis for our data is the utterance or sequence of utterances supplied by the informant in completing the test item.

The first problem in looking at the sequence is in deciding whether all of its parts are of equal importance or if they serve equal functions in realizing the speech act aimed at. Based on the CCSARP coding scheme, we have dealt with this problem by analyzing the sequence into the following segments: (a) address term(s), (b) head act, and (c) adjunct(s) to head act. The segmentation is meant to delimit the utterance(s) that constitute the nucleus of the speech act (the 'head act'), i.e., that part of the sequence which might serve to realize the act independently of other elements. The segmentation in Head acts and Adjuncts is based on sequential, as well as contextual and functional criteria.

A t-test was performed to analyze the directness level of requests with level of directness as a dependent variable and language as a grouping variable. A chi-square analysis was performed where frequencies of different components of the requestive speech act were compared.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategy Types

The different situations given to subjects to respond to could elicit from them nine different strategy types which form a scale of indirectness for making a request according to our categorization. The distribution of strategy types on the scale is meant to yield the relative degree of directness preferred in making requests in these two languages.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the main requesting strategy types for two languages in six situations. A t-test was performed with the mean level of directness on the scale of 1-9 as the dependent variable and nationality as an independent variable. The result reveals a significant effect of language for all 6 situations at $p < .001$.

Table 1

Percentage Distribution of Main Request Strategy Types in Two Languages and Six Situations

Situation	Strategy Type	English	Persian
S1	1	.00	64.00
Student to Student	7	94.23	34.00
request to borrow a pen	8	5.77	2.00
S2	1	.00	76.00
Friend to friend	5	3.85	.00
request to borrow notes	7	94.23	24.00
	8	1.92	.00
S3	0	1.92	0.00
Older brother to	1	67.31	96.00
younger brother	6	1.92	.00
request to close	7	28.85	2.00
the window	8	.00	2.00
S4	0	1.92	.00
Student to professor	1	1.92	66.00
request for an extension	5	.00	2.00
	7	88.46	28.00
	8	7.69	4.00
S5	0	1.92	.00
Student to waiter	1	1.92	72.00
request for the menu	7	96.15	18.00
	8	.80	10.00
S6	0	.00	2.00
Student to professor	1	.00	46.00
request for help	5	.00	2.00
	7	71.15	46.00
	8	28.85	4.00

Note. Significant level of difference in each situation is found at $p < .001$ (t-test).

As shown in Table 1, Persian speaking students use significantly more direct strategies in all six situation compared to English speakers, i.e., these two cultures disagree on the specific directness level appropriate for a given situation, reflecting overall cross-cultural differences in directness level. More than half of the requests in the Persian data (70.00%) fall into the most direct category (1) vs English which is only 11.86% in this category. Furthermore, in English 78.85% of the requests fall into category 7 (conventionally indirect) compared to 25.33% in Persian. In English, subjects used hints (the most indirect strategies) 7.37% of the time compared to 4.67% in Persian. In both languages the least frequent strategy used was hints, which is the most indirect strategy type for making a request. The mean level of directness for all Persian requests in the data is 2.80 compared to English which is 6.279. These results seem to indicate a relatively high overall level of directness in the use of requestive speech acts among the Persian speaking subjects compared to English speaking subjects. See Appendix B for some actual examples of these strategies in English and Persian.

Alerters

Alerters can serve as attention getters, which in turn can affect the social impact of the utterance (Blum-Kulka et al., 1985). In their sociopragmatic role, they may act either as downgraders, meant to mitigate (soften) the act or alternatively as upgraders that intensify its degree of coerciveness.

Requests were further analyzed for the presence or absence of alerters. If an alerter was used, its function was specified as upgrader or downgrader based on the semantic properties of the alerter (e.g., you fool vs. excuse me) and other contextual features of the request sequence. Table 2 shows the distribution of alerters in two languages across the six situations. A chi-square analysis was performed and significant results were found in all six situations at $p < .05$ level.

Persian speaking students used significantly more alerters in all six situations compared to English speaking students. Overall Persian students used alerters 73.67% of the time when making a request compared to English which is only 40.06%.

In English five out of six situations alerters were used with the mitigating function (e.g., dear, excuse me,...). In situation #3 (request to a younger brother to close the window) 11.54% of alerters in English were used to intensify the force of the request (e.g., jerk, you fool,...). In Persian no alerters were used with the intensifying function. See Appendix B for some actual examples of alerters in English and Persian.

Table 2

Percentage Distribution of Alerters Used in Two Languages across Situations

Situation	English	Persian
S1 $x^2 = 3.71$ $p < .054$	55.77	74.00
S2 $x^2 = 6.933$ $p < .008$	23.08	48.00
S3 $x^2 = 16.5$ $p < 0.0001$	11.54(-) 5.57(+)	56.00
S4 $x^2 = 43.906$ $p < 0.0001$	25.00	90.00
S5 $x^2 = 14.890$ $p < 0.0001$	40.38	78.00
S6 $x^2 = 9.009$ $p < .003$	78.85	98.00

Note. + = Downgrader (softening the act)
- = Upgrader (intensifying the act)

Supportive Moves

The speaker may choose to support or to aggravate the speech act by external modifications (supportive moves). Supportive moves do not affect the utterance used for realizing the act, but rather affect the context in which it is embedded, and thus indirectly modify illocutionary force (Edmondson, 1981).

Table 3 shows the distribution of supportive moves in two languages across six situations. A chi-square analysis was performed and significant results were found in three out of six situations at $p < .05$ level.

Table 3

Percentage Distribution of Supportive Moves Used in Two Languages Across Six Situations

Situation	English	Persian
S1 $x^2 = 2.542$ $p < .111$	13.46	26.00
S2 $x^2 = .126$ $p < .723$	84.62	82.00
S3 $x^2 = 5.892$ $p < .053$	36.54(+) 26.92(-)	60.00(+) 20.00(-)
S4 $x^2 = 4.709$ $p < .030$	90.38	74.00
S5 $x^2 = 5.126$ $p < .024$	7.69	24.00
S6 $x^2 = 1.030$ $p < .310$	50.00	60.00

Note. + = Downgrader (softening the act)
- = Upgrader (intensifying the act)

In situations 3, 4, and 5 significant differences were found between the English and Persian speakers. In situations 3 and 5, Persian speakers used significantly more supportive moves than English speakers, but in situation 4 English speakers used more supportive moves. In the other three situations, although no significant differences are found, there seems to be a tendency for Persian speaking students to use more supportive moves than English speakers.

In five out of six situations supportive moves were used to soften the force of the request. The only situation where we have some supportive moves used as upgraders (to intensify the force of the request) is in situation #3 (request to younger brother), in which both English and Persian speaking students used some supportive moves to intensify the force of their request. In this case, English speakers used slightly more supportive moves as upgraders compared to Persian speakers (26.92% vs. 20.00%).

Another important factor to consider here is the fact that Persian speakers modify their supportive moves with adjectives and adverbs more frequently than Americans; therefore, the length of the utterances by Persian speakers is, in most cases, longer than Americans. See Appendix B for some actual examples of supportive moves in English and Persian.

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Internal Modifiers

Internal modifiers are defined as those elements which are linked to the head act, whose presence is not essential for the utterance to be potentially understood as a request (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Internal modifiers can affect the social impact of the utterance. They may act as downgraders, softening the impact of the act, or as upgraders intensifying its force.

Table 4 shows the distribution of internal modifiers in two languages across six situations. A chi-square analysis was performed and significant results for four out of six situations at $p < .005$ were found.

In three out of six situation Persian speakers used significantly more internal modifiers compared to English speakers. But in situation #3 (request to younger brother) English speakers used significantly more internal modifiers compared to Persian speakers. In five out of six situations internal modifiers were used to soften the force of the request, but in situation #3 some of the internal modifiers were used to intensify the force of the request (English 26.92% vs. Persian 12.00%).

Table 4

Percentage Distribution of Internal Modifiers Used in Two Languages Across Six Situations

Situation	English	Persian
S1 $x^2 = 31.167$ $p < 0.0001$	36.54	90.00
S2 $x^2 = 9.764$ $p < .002$	48.03	78.00
S3 $x^2 = 8.058$ $p < .018$	36.54(+) 26.92(-)	24.00(+) 12.00(-)
S4 $x^2 = .333$ $p < .564$	78.85	74.00
S5 $x^2 = 3.764$ $p < .152$	80.77(+) 1.92(-)	68.00
S6 $x^2 = 3.923$ $p < .0048$	40.38	60.00

Note. + = Downgrader (softening the act)
- = Upgrader (intensifying the act)

Overall, Persian speakers used slightly more internal modifiers than English speakers (65.67% vs 53.53%). See Appendix B for some actual examples of internal modifiers in English and Persian.

Perspective

Choice of perspective presents another source of variation in requests. When making a request, speakers may choose to emphasize the role of the agent (can you help me...), their own role as recipients (could I ask for your help...), or they may avoid the issue by using an inclusive "we" (can we do...), or the impersonal (this needs to be done.). Languages may differ not only in their general preferences in choice of perspectives, but also in the conventionalization of perspectives within specific strategy types (Blum-Kulka, 1989).

The distribution of different perspective types used by the two different groups is shown in Table 5. A chi-square analysis was performed and a significant level of difference at $p < 0.0001$ was found for four out of six situations (situations 1, 2, 4, 5).

Table 5

Percentage Distribution of Perspective Types used in Two Languages Across Six Situations

Situation	English			Persian		
	0	1	2	0	1	2
S1 $x^2 = 94.305$ $p < 0.0001$ df=2	1.92	94.23	3.85	.00	.00	100.00
S2 $x^2 = 97.198$ $p < 0.0001$ df=2	5.77	94.23	.00	4.00	.00	96.00
S3 $x^2 = 1.335$ $p < .513$ df=2	1.92	1.92	96.15	4.00	.00	96.00
S4 $x^2 = 86.792$ $p < 0.0001$ df=2	21.15	76.92	1.92	2.00	4.00	94.00
S5 $x^2 = 91.491$ $p < 0.0001$ df=2	1.92	96.15	1.92	4.00	2.00	94.00
S6 $x^2 = 1.489$ $p < .222$ df=2	.0	3.85	96.15	2.00	.00	98.00

Note. 0=impersonal 1=1st person 2=2nd person perspective

The distribution of requestive speech acts by perspective indeed indicates cross-linguistic differences in the use of perspective types. An important factor to consider here is that in those cases where speakers have used strategy #1 (the most direct strategy) the choice of perspective type is a linguistic reflex of the specific strategy and not an option. However, in those cases where the speakers had the option of choosing any of the three different strategy types, Persian speakers have used the second person perspective relatively more than English speakers, who have a tendency to use the first person perspective more often.

Discussion

So far we have seen that there are significant differences between Persian and English in all the features of requestive speech acts. We will now discuss some possible explanations for these observed differences.

The results for the distribution of main request strategy types, presented in Table 1, clearly show that the Persian speakers are more direct compared to American speakers. In the Persian data 70% of requests are phrased as impositives (most direct), more than 25% are phrased as conventionally indirect, and only about 4% as hints. The other extreme of directness is manifested by speakers of American English. In the English requests, direct impositives constitute 11.86%, conventional indirect strategies 78.85%, and hints 7.37%.

Our findings indicate that Modern Persian shares with English a rich repertoire of requesting strategies which is fully exploited in actual use. Yet, if viewed from a cross-cultural perspective, the general level of directness in Persian speaking society is relatively high.

This difference in directness level does not necessarily imply that the speakers of one language are more polite than the speakers of the other language. There is evidence to suggest that indirectness and politeness are not necessary correlates of each other universally or for any given culture (Blum-Kulka, 1987). In politeness ratings of request strategies by native speakers of American English, Hebrew, British English, and German respectively, Blum-Kulka (1987) found that the highest ratings for politeness were granted to conventional indirect strategies and not to hints, which are still more indirect.

Another related issue to the above discussion to consider in the interpretation of observed cross-cultural variations in linguistic behavior concerns the social meanings carried by these behaviors in each of the respective cultures. Choices made along the continuum of directness-indirectness may not necessarily mean the same to members of two cultures; thus, though directness is usually associated in the literature with impoliteness, its exact social meaning may also be a cross-cultural variant. Brown and Levinson (1978) convincingly argue for two types of politeness: negative politeness, manifested by verbal strategies that express the effort not to be heard as imposing, and positive politeness, expressed by verbal strategies that emphasize in-group membership and an assumption of reciprocity.

In the Western world, politeness is usually associated with negative or deference strategies. The show of deference is expressed by the nonassumption of compliance, by leaving the hearer options for noncompliance (Cottrill, Forthcoming; Matsumoto, 1988; Wierzbicka, 1985a, 1985b).

It is possible that certain cultures favor positive politeness as a way of dealing with others, more than some other cultures. Positive politeness or, to use Scollon and Scollon's (1983) term, solidarity politeness, is expressed by verbal strategies that emphasize in-group membership and the assertion or assumption of reciprocity.

This view of regarding solidarity politeness as encompassing directness is supported by our findings on the use of direct strategies for making requests and also by the use of mitigating elements in request strategies. Alerters with a mitigating function (e.g., dear friend, excuse me, forgive me tremendously,....) were used quiet frequently in all situations. Also many lengthy and elaborate external and internal modifiers were used for softening the impact of the direct approach.

The use of positive politeness strategies in Persian stems from the value of group orientedness in Iranian culture. In Iran, people tend to depend upon their relationship with others, and this dependency upon others is especially common within the family. Children often remain financially and psychologically dependent upon their parents even into their graduate studies. The concept of individualism is truly alien to the Iranian culture. In fact, there is no satisfactory translation for "individualism" in Persian. Words like [xososiyat], which is the common translation for individualism, seem to be limited to scholarly circles, and are certainly not a part of the working vocabulary of the vast majority of people. Even this translation of "individualism" into Persian has the negative implication of "everyone acting for himself" in a somewhat selfish, chaotic way. The importance of group harmony is illustrated in the concept of [mæšvəræt], which translates as "consulting with others at all times". A sense of "groupness" also manifests itself in the way that Iranians refer to older men as [pɛdær] (father), older women as [maðær] (mother), and slightly older acquaintances as [xɑhær] (sister) and [bəraðær] (brother).

It seems in cultures like the Iranian culture, where the acknowledgement of one's status as a member of the group has greater importance in determining norms of interaction than considerations of individual freedom (cf. Wierzbicka, 1985a, 1985b), the politeness strategies used would be more of the positive politeness than negative politeness.

So far, this discussion has mainly focused on the relationship between levels of directness and levels of politeness. But according to research (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Levinson, 1983) indirectness is certainly not the only dimension of requesting behavior which affects politeness. The presence or absence of various internal and external modifiers also plays a role in this respect. Using more supportive moves, internal modifiers, and alerters, with more mitigating

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elements to further modify the alerters or supportive moves (e.g., dear friend, excuse me tremendously), have caused Persian utterances to be longer compared to English utterances. Double and triple marking does discriminate between the Persian and English data. As Rintell and Mitchell (1989) mention, having more and longer modifications in requests can be attributed to the native speakers' perceptions of request as more elaborate and therefore more polite. Also different address forms used by Persian speakers have different levels of formality in Persian (e.g., dear friend, Mr. Excellency, respectful Mr...) which in turn can add to the politeness of utterances.

Clearly, the conventional expression of requests in the Persian data is hardly indirect. Rather, the conventional expression of requests in Persian is extremely direct compared to English, and it reflects a culturally specific interactional style in the requestive behavior of the two languages examined. But, as mentioned before, directness is only one feature of the request sequence which is related to politeness. When considering other components of the request sequence (i.e., alerters, supportive moves, internal modifiers, perspective), it was found that Persian speakers use these components more frequently and possibly compensate for their directness by the use of more supportive moves, alerters, and internal modifiers.

CONCLUSION

One of the important goals of this study was to expand the scope of empirical work investigating speech acts across cultures, as it is one area of language use which urgently needs further research (Rintell, 1981; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Flowerdew, 1988, 1990). This study was also a response to the need to move away from Anglo-cultural ethnocentricity in the study of speech acts by widening the scope of the languages and cultures investigated and, thereby, testing the basic concepts on which the study of speech acts have so far been based, to see the extent to which they are appropriate to describe non-western societies.

I hope to have shown that, due to the narrow scope of the CCSARP research, its claims regarding the universality of a preference for conventionally indirect requests are not completely warranted. The Persian language deviates from this pattern in that direct request forms are used by a preponderance of the subjects in all of the situations studied here. Also, the observed differences discovered here between English and Persian strategies for requests justify a culture-specific description of at least some aspects of speech-act forms across languages, i.e., level of directness and proportion of components related to the head act. This does not mean, of course, that there are no universal, or at least cross-culturally shared properties of speech acts. It does mean, however, that further comparisons between languages on these lines will have to be alert to universal and culture-specific factors as they attempt to account for the complex nature of the interdependence among pragmatic considerations, linguistic meaning, and social

rules of usage that govern speech act realization in any particular language. The issue as to what facets of particular speech acts should be considered universal and what is culture-specific definitely needs more research.

Our findings indicate also that the relation of politeness and directness should be reconsidered. In some societies politeness is achieved by means other than directness/indirectness, e.g., by the proportion of supportive moves, alerters, internal modifications involved, the length of utterance, and the use of different pronoun and verb forms.

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APPENDIX A

ENGLISH VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

AGE: _____ SEX:_____

DEGREE: _____ MAJOR: _____

NATIVE LANGUAGE: _____

Please read the following descriptions of situations and then write what you would say in each situation.

1. For registration you need to fill out a couple of forms. You search all of your pockets and cannot find a pen. You want to ask another student who is sitting next to you in the department hall. What would you say?

2. You were sick and missed your class yesterday. You need to borrow a friend's notes. What would you say?

3. You are studying at home. Your younger brother opens the window and the cold wind blows right into your face and bothers you. You want to ask him to close it. What would you say?

4. Your term paper is due, but you haven't finished it yet. You want to ask your professor for an extension. What would you say?

5. You and your friend go to a restaurant to eat. You want to order and need to ask the waiter for the menu. What would you say?

6. You want to make some copies on the machine down the department hall but find the instructions confusing. Just then you see one of the department's professors whom you haven't spoken to before passing by. You want to ask for help. What would you say?

APPENDIX B: Sample Responses

Direct Requests:

(1) Menu, please.
(2) Close the window.
(3) Lotfan ghalameto yek lahzeh be man bedeh.
please pen your one moment to me give
'Please give me your pen for a mement'
(4) Dirooz kelas boody? jozvetoon ra bedin man
yesterday class were you? your notes give me
benevisam. Mibagkshida.
write I. Excuse me.
'Were you in class yesterday? Give me your notes to write. Excuse me.'

Conventionally Indirect Requests:

(5) Excuse me, could you help me with this machine?
(6) Could I have an extension on my paper because "so-and-so" has happened?
(7) Dooste aziz, dirooz shoma tu kelas boodid?
friend dear yesterday you in class were
Lotfan mishe jozvetoon ra be man
please possible notes your OBJ to me
bedahid ta man ham benevisam?
give so me too write
'Dear friend, were you in class yesterday? Can you please give your notes to me, in order for me to write it too?'
(8) Agha ozr mikham, momkene liste ghaza ra
Mr. excuse me, possible menu OBJ
biyarin?
bring
'Mr. excuse me, is it possible to bring the menu?'

Hints:

(9) Do you have a pen?
(10) I could really use a little more time to finish my paper.
I've been really busy.
(11) Agha ghaza chi darind?
Mr. food what you have
'Mr. what do you have for food?'
(12) Bebakhshid ostad shoma midoonid ke
Excuse me professor you know that

in machin chetor kar mikonad?
this machine how works Do?
'Excuse me, Prof. do you know how this machineworks?'

Alerters:

(13) **Excuse me**, may I borrow your pen?
(14) **Little brother**, close the window or I'll kill you.
(15) **bebakhshid ostad**, shoma middonid ke.....
excuse me, Professor, you know that....
(16) **Dooste aziz**: agar momkene.....
Dear friend: if possible.....

Supportive Moves:

(17) Kevin, would you please close the window? **It is too cold in here.**
(18) Excuse me, do you have an extra pen that I could borrow? **I can't believe I forgot to bring one.**
(19) Lotfan mishe jozveto be man bedi? **man**
please possible notes to me give I
mariz boodam va be kelas natoonestam
sick was and to class could not
beyam.
come.
'Would you please give me your notes? I was sick and could not come to class?'
(20) Un panjere ra beband. **Sardam shod. Zood**
that window Obj close. Cold Do Hurry
bash.
Do
'Close that window. I got cold. Hurry up.'

Internal Modifiers:

(21) Excuse me, can I borrow your pen **for a second?**
(22) Can I **please** borrow your notes?
(23) **Lotfan** ghalametoon **ra yek lahzeh** bedahid.
please your pen OBJ one moment give
'Would you please give me your pen for a moment'
(24) Dadash **lotfan** panjereh **ra** beband.
brother please window OBJ close
'Brother, please close the window.'